

The Perils of Being Kind

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The Perils of Being Kind

by [Poker](#)

Summary

Tommy may come from a long line of Fey Hunters but he has always been kind. And that's what gets him.

Notes

Also known as 'Poker tries writing that Fey AU that was bouncing around a few months ago'

All credit for the prompt goes to JadeSpeedster17's Snow King AU Prompt.

Trigger warnings: Offscreen deaths are briefly described, some mentions of burns, talking about someone like a research subject

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

The moment he saw the pancakes, Tommy felt bile rise in the back of his throat.

Not because the pancakes looked disgusting. The pancakes looked like perfection, golden brown and topped with swirls of maple syrup. He could see the faint flecks of cinnamon and the smell of them made his mouth water.

But pancakes were for big news and judging by the serious looks on his parents' faces, this news wasn't going to be good.

He threw himself down in the chair, hastily cutting himself a bite. Might as well hear it on a full stomach. They were sweetened to perfection.

They tasted like ashes in his mouth. He took a few more bites, trying his best to savor them even with the memories dragging him down. His mother made the best pancakes but she only made them when there was news.

The last time they had surprise pancakes for breakfast, they told him Tubbo had to move to the city at the base of the mountain. An encounter with a royal Fae who wasn't backing down. The city was the very last option they had, offering more protection than minor charms and cold iron. They had been confident that Tubbo was safe there.

That didn't mean it hadn't hurt waving goodbye to his friend. Tommy put his fork down with a grimace. "Please tell me the fucker didn't get to him." He said. He'd have to burn down the forest.

His mother and father shared a look. "No." His father said, knowing what he meant. "Tubbo is safe as far as we know."

"Then what's with the fucking pancakes?" Tommy said. He wasn't a child. He could recognize a tasty bribe when he saw it.

His mother sighed at his language but didn't correct him. "Our last hunt... turned up more than we expected." She said, choosing her words carefully. "We'll need to introduce you to basic fieldwork earlier than expected."

Despite those ominous words, Tommy grinned. "Fuck yeah." He said. Tubbo had already been working on charms before he left, but Tommy hadn't been allowed to do anything.

"It's not exactly our choice." His father said, his mouth a thin line. "But your mother and I will have to be out a lot. And no one has answered our calls."

"Wait." This sounded like a trap. Was he getting stuck with the chores? "What am I doing?"

"Well--"

"I think it would be better to show you." His mother said. She sighed at his father's look. "He's not going to fully understand unless we show him."

Tommy pushed his plate away, standing up. “Then let’s go see it, yeah?” He said. Inside, he was practically bouncing in excitement.

“Do you have red clothing?” Tommy rolled his eyes, motioning at his red sleeves. “Cold iron? Salt?”

“Yes and yes.” Tommy said, making his father frown. “And what feels like every protective charm against the Fae that has existed since I was a babe.”

He traced a whorl in the wooden table, bracing himself for the not quite admonishment that always came when he said that. “We just want to see you safe.” His father said. “This will be risky and a hunter’s child is a trophy to the Fae.”

Tommy nodded, grimacing at the thought. That was why Tubbo had been pursued until they were forced to move. It was also why he had to stay home within the property lines where the protection was strongest.

“I’ll be safe. I’m not an idiot.” He said, puffing up. “Those Fey won’t know what hit them.”

“I’m sure they won’t.” His mother said, a gentle smile flickering over her lips. “Follow then.”

She pushed away from the table, heading for the front door. Tommy stuck close behind, shivering when he stepped out into the cold mountain air.

He was expecting to be led to the animal pens out back where trapped Fey were usually kept. He had never been back there, but he had stayed up once or twice and see them carrying bird cages covered in blankets towards the pens. “Why here?”

Instead, his mother led him to the cellar doors. She lifted a chain over her neck, revealing a key made of cold iron. “This one required more measures to be taken.” She said, her tone steely.

Tommy frowned, feeling the first stirrings of dread making it past his excitement. “What goes in the fucking cellar?” He hated that place. It was dark and he swore there were monsters down there when he was little.

Not that he believed in monsters. He was a big man, the only true monsters in the world were humans and Fey.

“It was necessary.” She said, her tone allowing no argument. “This case was a special one. We’ve used every piece of iron we’ve had. Had to slaughter most of our research subjects.”

Wait, what? But before he could question it, his father gently nudged him towards the steps. Tommy shivered as freezing cold air seeped out, instantly numbing his fingers.

He hopped down the stairs two at a time, feeling them creak under his boots. The air seemed to get colder with every step, reaching freezing as he stepped down to bottom, grinning at how he didn’t stumble now.

And when he looked up, his eyes were met with cold brown eyes.

There was the rattling of chains as the Royal Fae shifted. Tommy gaped at the scene. Intricate lines had been drawn out on the floor, linking with iron circles that had been inlaid into the floor. The iron bars of the cage were as thick as his fist, the iron chains and manacles even thicker. All were covered in a light coating of frost.

He swallowed hard. Even if he didn't recognize the brown curly hair or the oddly human like brown eyes, there was no way he could miss the pale blue clothing and the golden circlet, still stained with soot.

This was a lot bigger than hobgoblins and nasty pixies. This was a royal Fae, the son of the king. The kind that Tommy was told to stay away from at all costs and Yes That Means All Costs No Matter What.

And now he was chained up in Tommy's cellar.

The Fae watched Tommy like a cat watching a mouse. Not sure if it was a toy or something to eat.

"Prince Wilbur." His father said, tone oozing with satisfaction. The Fae's eyes flickered away from Tommy, regarding his father with disgust.

"I see you've brought your whelp." Wilbur said in a voice that could freeze rivers. Tommy forced himself to stand up straight, refusing to be cowed.

"Oi, fuck you, I'm not a fucking whelp or a child." Tommy snapped. He's a big man!

The Fae grinned. "Sure you're not." He said, his tone dripping with condescension. Tommy snarled at him, a stream of curse words prevented by his mother slapping a hand over his mouth.

He winced a little at the sting, looking up at her. "Don't talk to him. He just wants to wind you up and confuse you to make you easier to enchant." She said, sneering at Wilbur. "All you have to do is hold the key and check on the cellar periodically to make sure nothing's gotten through the wards."

Tommy frowned. As cool as this sounded, it also sounded like the kind of bad idea that would have Tubbo sitting on him to stop him. He motioned at his mouth, prompting his mother to remove her hand. "Are you sure this is a good idea?" He whispered. "Not that I ain't good enough to handle this. Just wanted to check."

His mother's eyes softened. "I know you're brave enough to handle this." She said. "This was the result of a lucky hunt, won by the sacrifices of our friends and innocents. With this as leverage, we can force the Winter Court into a treaty that will finally erase their scourge from this land."

In the background, he heard Wilbur scoff. His father tugged on one chain, making the Fae hiss.

“So whatever you do, you can’t let him escape.” His father said. “We’ll be gone for a few days to gather supplies and other Hunters. The pantry is fully stocked and you know the rules.”

“Yeah.” Tommy said, nodding quickly. “I’ve fucking got this. It is so very gotten. Nothing has ever been more gotten.”

His mother reached up, clasp the chain around Tommy’s neck. The key felt heavier than he thought it would.

“We trust you.” She said. “After this, we can take you on your first hunt. We just need to finish this first.”

“Fuck yeah.” Tommy said, grinning. But he could feel the cracks of nervousness in his enthusiasm. Prisoner duty wasn’t exactly the magnificent start he was imagining for his Hunter career.

But it’d be fine, would it? He just had to walk down here a few times, check things over, and leave, nothing more.

He could feel Wilbur’s eyes boring into him as he walked up the stairs.

The first problem came a few hours later. His parents had left in a flurry of hugs and last words. Leaving him to stare at the wall and slowly eat the rest of his pancakes.

He was bored. Really bored. Normally he would have sent a message to Tubbo, arranged a bit of sneaking out and meeting. But Tubbo was miles away and letters would take hours by cart to reach him.

His thoughts keep drifting towards Wilbur. He had never seen a Royal Fey before. Wilbur had looked annoying but also interesting. More interesting than reading his Hunter manual again.

Tommy reached up, holding the key. One visit couldn’t hurt, right? Maybe he could even find something useful he could tell his parents, make them proud.

Nodding to himself, he headed straight for the cellar, taking the stairs a little bit slower this time. Wilbur was still sitting on the floor, no movement except for his eyes which followed Tommy’s every movement.

“Back already?” He asked. Tommy folded his arms, leaning back against the wall.

“Yeah, got fucking bored. Figured I’d come down here and take a look at the idiot who got himself captured.” He said. Wilbur’s face twisted and for a moment, Tommy’s breath stuttered in his lungs.

And then Wilbur chuckled. “You’re such a child.” He said.

“Fuck you, I’m not a child!” Tommy snapped. He was seventeen years old, nearly a fully grown adult. Wilbur laughed again, louder this time.

“Sure you’re the biggest man here.” Wilbur said, shaking his head. Tommy nodded seriously.

“Damn right.” Tommy said, puffing up. “And you should remember that.”

Wilbur chuckled, shaking his head. “It’s this iron, messes with my memories. Mind taking it off so we can have a decent conversation?”

Tommy shook his head quickly. “Nah, you’re not going to get me like that.” He said. “I know that the moment you’re free, you’re going to kill me.”

“I wouldn’t kill you.” Wilbur said, sounding so earnest that Tommy had to look away. “You’re just a kid. Don’t look like that, I’m centuries old. You’re a little child compared to me. It’s understandable you’d feel scared enough to want protection.”

“It’s not about my age.” Tommy said. And he wasn’t a little child! “It’s about the fact that you’re some super powerful Fae from the royal family who could kill me without a thought.”

And he didn’t doubt that Wilbur would. It would be a masterful stroke of revenge against his parents.

“I wouldn’t.” Wilbur repeated. His words sounded as sweet as honey. “I don’t kill kids. But you’ve been raised by hunters your whole life. I know you’re probably confused and that makes you more scared.”

“Confused?” Tommy echoed. He wasn’t confused at all. All of his books were very clear on what an angry Fae could do.

“Do you think there’s any chance of me getting some food?” Wilbur asked, ignoring his question. “Plain fruit would do. I’m starving.”

Tommy paused, glancing between Wilbur and the cell. Technically he could do it safely. But would giving Wilbur fruit help him escape?

But he couldn’t just not give him food. It would be cruel to starve him even if he was an evil Fae. “Fine then.” Tommy agreed. “I’ll be right back.”

“Thank you, Tommy.” Wilbur said, beaming at him. Tommy shivered a bit, feeling a cold gaze resting on him again.

He brought apples back, reasoning that they’d be the most filling. “Here you go.” Tommy said, carefully stepping over the salt lines. He had to reach to get the apple into Wilbur’s reach.

But Wilbur didn’t grab the apple. Tommy froze as a cold hand wrapped around his hand. Wilbur grinned at him. “It’s very kind of you to give me food.” He said. “But a little stupid.”

Tommy growled, tilting his chin up and pulling back. “Let me go.” He snapped. He didn’t want to hurt Wilbur but he would if he had to defend himself.

“Of course.” Wilbur said. Tommy watched, confused, as the Fae released his hand, gently plucking away the apple. He bit into it, releasing a crisp crunch.

“That’s it?” Tommy asked, pulling his hand back. It didn’t feel any colder. There was none of the black frostbite the book had mentioned.

Wilbur looked back at him. “That’s it.” He confirmed. “I really don’t want to hurt you, Tommy. You have nothing to do with this.”

“But I’m your jailer.” Tommy said, glancing down at the key as if to confirm it was still there. He was completely thrown off. “I’m fucking- I’m the one keeping you here.”

Wilbur waved his other hand dismissively. “Because your parents asked you.” He said. There was something dark in his eyes. “Goodness knows that I listen to my dad too.”

“Dad?” Tommy asked, curious. “Who’s the fuckhead who’s related to you?”

“Philza.” Wilbur said. He grinned, something a bit softer than before. “King of the Winter Court. Didn’t your parents tell you that?”

“I knew that.” Tommy defended. “Just wanted to make sure you remembered him.”

“Sure, gremlin.” Wilbur said. He took another bite of his apple. “I remember the man who raised me just fine, thanks for the concern.”

And Tommy knew he should just walk away. He was a lot less bored now, Wilbur was fed, everything was done, right? But being sensible was also boring.

And Tubbo would love it if he could tell him about the Winter Court. His friend was like a magnet for stories and scraps of rumors. “What’s he like?” Tommy asked.

“Fantastic.” Wilbur said, staring down at his apple for a moment. “He’s the best dad I could have ever wished for. He’d probably think you were hilarious.”

“Not what I’m aiming for.” Tommy grumbled. He wasn’t hilarious, he was terrifying! He struck fear into the hearts of his foes!

“Aw.” Wilbur cooed, glancing back up at Tommy. “Is little Tommy sad? Does he need a hug from me?”

“Fuck off.” Tommy snapped, feeling his face grow warm. And the Fae could see it too, judging by his chuckles. “We’re not friends.”

“You wound me.” Wilbur said, dramatically clutching his heart. “I thought we bonded!”

“We definitely haven’t.” Tommy said, still red. “In fact, I hate you. So much.”

A voice in his head that sounded suspiciously like Tubbo told him he shouldn’t be trying to make a royal Fae mad. Tommy ignored that voice.

After all, what could Wilbur do? He was trapped behind iron bars, chained, and with so many runes around that all he could do was make the air a bit cold. Tommy could totally take him.

“That’s a bit harsh.” Wilbur said, adjusting his sitting position with a wince. Now that Tommy was looking closer, he could see how many burns were littered across the Fae’s body.

Fire works well at incapacitating those of the Winter Court. In his book it had been so simple, but seeing the livid red burns across Wilbur’s body made his stomach lurch.

It was hard to imagine his parents could do that. But they did, a voice in his head whispered. And they’ve done worse. You just haven’t seen it.

“After all, you don’t even know me.” Wilbur went on. Tommy flinched a little bit at that.

“Hard to get to know someone when their hobby is freezing entire towns.” Tommy muttered. He’d seen it too. His and Tubbo’s parents had brought them out to a town that was ruined by the Winter Court.

He had nightmares of houses encased in sheets of ice, no one able to chop through and rescue any inside.

“You say that as if you humans are better.” Wilbur said, his dark brown eyes hard. “Just this morning, your mother staked many of the smaller Fae with iron and burned their bodies in salt. Your father burned a farm to trap me. And now they are going to threaten my father with my death.”

“To save people.” Tommy argued. And he knew he shouldn’t. He should turn around and walk away.

But he didn’t.

“That’s how it always starts.” Wilbur said, smiling faintly. “This isn’t the first ransom I’ve seen. First, it begins by saying they’ll finally hobble a Court and save everyone. Then, they’ll start demanding wealth, wishes, magic. For us to bend the knee.”

“You’re lying.” Tommy snapped. Hunters were supposed to save people. Not chase after greed. They were heroes, they were above that. “My parents are good people.”

“To you.” Wilbur said. There was something distant to his gaze now. “I’m sure there are hunters who are good. You seem like a kind person. But there’s always greed.”

“Shut up.” Tommy snapped. He turned around, taking the stairs two at a time. “I’m not going to listen to you spreading lies about my family.”

“Fey can only tell the truth.” Wilbur’s voice followed him. “Everybody knows that.”

But they could dance around it, Tommy reminded himself. Had turned it into an art form in fact.

He flung himself into his chores, carefully tending the chickens and the solitary cow they had. None of the animals seemed to care that Wilbur was locked up in their basement.

“Stupid bastard.” Tommy said, burying himself into Henry’s short fur. They held still, allowing his to cling to them. “It’s for the best.”

It had to be. But Wilbur’s words kept racing around his head, entangling with his memories.

”Had to slaughter most of our research subjects.”

His mom had said that, hadn’t she? At the time, he hadn’t given it a second thought. But now, it clung to him like a burr.

He glanced up, looking further back to where a solitary shed stood. It was padlocked closed but the key would match the one currently around his neck.

It would be easy to go see. Tommy unwound his arms from around Henry’s neck, glancing around. He knew his parents were still on a road, but it still felt like they’d pop out at any second.

He scratched behind Henry’s ear. “Just a quick look.” He said. Henry mooed softly. “Yeah. I’ll be back before you know it. And then I can rub it in Wilbur’s face.”

Despite his confidence, he was slow to approach. He’d gotten a couple lashes over the years for trying to look inside the shed. His parents claimed he wasn’t ready for it.

Well. They left him to guard Wilbur. So clearly, Tommy could handle it.

He fit the key in the lock, twisting it sharply. The lock fell away. Steeling himself, Tommy pushed the door open.

He lasted about a second before staggering out and vomiting in the grass. He vomited again as the scent of burned flesh hit him.

Blindly, Tommy staggered to his feet, pulling the doors closed. He fumbled with the lock, his heart racing as he couldn’t get it to lock right.

The click of the lock didn’t make him feel any better. Tommy sank slowly to the ground, staring into nothing.

His parents couldn’t have done that. They were good people. They knew everyone’s name in the nearby village and were heroes to everyone living there. They loved him.

But there was no traces of that goodness in there. Tommy gagged, but there was nothing left to throw up.

Slowly, he forced himself to his feet, kicking mud over the mess. He trudged back to the house and wasn’t surprised when his feet took him around the side, towards the cellar.

“They’re dead.” Were Tommy’s first words. Wilbur didn’t look surprised.

“They’ll have better research subjects if they get their way.” He said. Tommy wanted to refute them, but what he saw told him it was useless. “Are you okay?”

“Huh?”

“You’re looking a little shaky. You should sit down before you hurt yourself.” Wilbur said. “You might feel fine now, but shock can be a bitch.”

“I’m the biggest of men, I don’t get shock. Shock is terrified of me.” But he sank down onto the last stair.

“I’m sure it is.” Wilbur said. “What’s your favorite color?”

“What?” Tommy asked, looking back up at Wilbur. That was a weird question to ask.

“Your favorite color.” Wilbur repeated. “You humans see these things? Called colors? And you prefer one of them more than the others?”

“I know what you mean, bitch.” Tommy said. “But why do you care about that?”

“Like I said before.” Wilbur said, shrugging. “You seem like a nice kid. I’d figure I’d help you calm down a bit. You’ve suffered a nasty shock either way. Favorite color?”

“Blue.” Tommy said. It’s not like Wilbur could hurt him with that information.

“Same as my dad’s.” Wilbur said softly. Tommy wasn’t quite sure how he felt about that. Royal Fey weren’t supposed to have favorite colors.

“What’s yours?” He asked, curious despite his better judgment. Would Wilbur have one as well?

“Yellow. I have a yellow sweater and it’s one of my favorite things to wear.” Wilbur said. He chuckled at Tommy’s surprised look. “Did you really think we wore these clothes all the time?”

“No.” Tommy mumbled, feeling his cheeks warm. “That would be a stupid thing to think.”

“Aw, look, you’re blushing.” Wilbur cooed. “That’s adorable. You don’t have to look away, sunshine, I think it’s cute.”

“I’m not cute, I’m intimidating.” Tommy said, putting his hands over his face. Something inside of him went a bit warm and gooey at the nickname.

“The most intimidating.” Wilbur agreed. Tommy was pretty sure he was being condescending but he’d take it. “Even more intimidating than Technoblade, I’d guess.”

Tommy looked up at the name. “You know the Blade?” He asked. His textbooks were filled with dire stories of what happened to those who encountered the Fae during one of their rages.

Wilbur hummed. “He’s my brother.” He said. “So yeah, you can say I know him very well. He’s probably super worried right now. He can be kind of overprotective.”

“I could take him.” Tommy mumbled. But the clearing was warded as much as possible and the house even more so. There was no way the Blade could find them here.

Which was a bad thing, right? Because now Tommy couldn’t show off his ultra cool fighting prowess.

“I’m sure you could.” Wilbur said. He shifted a bit, making the chains rattle. “But isn’t it time for your nap?”

Tommy reddened again. “Fuck off, I’m not a little kid.” He snapped. Gods, it was like Wilbur was trying to tease him. “I don’t need a nap. Those are for babies.”

“Don’t all young humans need naps?” Wilbur said innocently. Tommy stuck his tongue out at him. “So you can grow up to be big and strong?”

“No!”

“I had to take so many naps when I was younger.” Wilbur said nostalgically. “Dad would drag me into his nest and wrap me up in his wings until I fell asleep. Sometimes Techno would read out loud from his book too.”

Huh. That sounded... surprisingly nice. Tommy’s parents had never done anything like that. They claimed that the bedtime stories village kids got would make him weaker, less tough.

“Figures you’d be such a pussy about sleeping.” Tommy said, resting his chin on his hands. He yawned.

“Want me to try? I can sing a mean lullaby.” Wilbur said. He rolled his eyes at Tommy’s skeptical look. “Any enchantments I try would be broken as soon as you hit the salt. Don’t look at me like that. You’d be perfectly fine.”

“I’d be fine anyways, bitch.” Tommy said. There wasn’t an illusion that could catch a big man like him.

Maybe taking his words for agreement, Wilbur started singing. Something soft, wordless.

Slowly, he felt himself sink down, curling up on the floor. And when sleep came, he welcomed it with open arms, Wilbur’s lullaby following him into his dreams.

Waking comes in fits and starts. Tommy grumbled, uncurling and stretching out. His arm had fallen asleep when he used it for a pillow.

He sat up slowly, looking around. This wasn’t his bed. He was sitting at the bottom of the stairs in the cellar.

Because for some reason, he had let Wilbur sing him a lullaby so he could take a nap.

He looked up quickly, looking at the Fae. Wilbur's chin had dipped to his chest, his eyes closed. Judging by the even rise and fall of the other's chest, they were asleep.

His face warm, Tommy crept up the stairs. He couldn't let that happen again. What would his parents think if they had found him sleeping there?

Behind him, Wilbur's eyes cracked open, dark eyes watching Tommy as he walked upstairs.

He'd really tried. He really did. He ate lunch, studied, and even cooked his own dinner. Made up games, told stories to thin air, started and finished a new letter to Tubbo. All the while pretending like there wasn't a key hanging around his neck and a prisoner below his feet.

Just a normal day.

But something kept drawing him back to the cellar, day after day. He talked himself into it at first. Reasoned that he had to feed Wilbur and that meant going into the cellar. He would put it off with chore after chore before cracking.

Wilbur was... surprisingly nice. He offered to sing for Tommy and was part way through teaching Tommy how to sing the scales. And he never got mad when Tommy messed up a bit. He told him stories about the Court and talked about the flowers that would appear when the magic was just right.

But the more Tommy lingered, the worse he felt about it. It was easy dealing with Wilbur when he could cast him as the monstrous prince of the Winter Court.

But Wilbur didn't act like a monster and that was the worst part. The more he talked about the Winter Court, the more Tommy found himself a little jealous of it.

"You're so lucky to have a sibling." Tommy had said one evening, biting into a slice of toast. "My parents said training one kid was enough."

"Yeah, Techno can be great." Wilbur said, his eyes going soft like they always did when he talked about his family. "He's kind of annoying sometimes but I know he always has my back."

"Yeah, yeah, you don't have to brag about it." Tommy said with a snort. "I get it, you're the lucky bastard who gets to have a sibling."

"I can be your sibling if you want." Wilbur offered.

Tommy nearly choked on his next bite, swallowing awkwardly. "The fuck was that?" He asked. He couldn't have heard that right.

"You don't have an older brother and I don't have a younger brother." Wilbur said as if it all made sense. "We can be siblings then and that solves that. I've always wanted a younger brother."

“I don’t know if you noticed, big man, but we’re kind of different species.” Tommy said, waving at Wilbur. “Not to mention the whole ‘opposing forces’ thing.”

“That’s fixable.” Wilbur said. “We don’t have to be opposing forces.”

Tommy hesitated. “I’m not going to let you out.” He said. But guilt made his heart hammer against his ribs. Sickeningly, he wanted to release Wilbur.

“You don’t have to.” Wilbur said soothingly. “Most hunters never fight one of the upper class Fey. We don’t have to be enemies. We can be friends.”

“Like brothers.”

“Don’t say that, I will cry.” Wilbur said. And his eyes were suspiciously wet. Tommy laughed, shaking his head.

“C’mon big man, I don’t think it’s going to work.” He said, taking another bite of toast. “Can we talk about something else?”

He really wanted it to work. He really did. Wilbur was kind and thoughtful and let Tommy gamble about random stuff for hours longer than his parents did.

But Tommy was a human and Wilbur was a fae, and people of those species didn’t get a happy ending together.

“Fine then.” Wilbur said. For a moment, Tommy thought he saw something darker flash in his eyes but it disappeared immediately. “Have you been practicing your scales?”

Tommy perked up. “Yeah!” He said. “I think Henry likes it, he always-“

Tommy paused. Wilbur frowned. “Are you okay?” He asked.

“Horses.” Tommy said, bolting to his feet and looking up the stairs. “My parents are home. They’ll be furious if they saw me talking to you.”

“Go then.” Wilbur said, looking a bit upset. “I don’t want you getting into trouble.”

Tommy nodded hurriedly, sprinting up the stairs. He grabbed the shovel he’d left next to cellar doors, circling around the side of the house just as his mother walked up to the door.

“Tommy!” She said. With one quick movement, she snatched the chain and lifted it over his head. Tommy tried to ignore the sense of loss from no longer having the key. Behind her, his dad swung down from the second horse. “Were you busy?”

“Yeah.” Tommy said. He swallowed a bit, trying to get his lie in order. “I was working on Henry’s pen. You’re back earlier than I thought you’d be.”

“Oh, yes.” His dad said. “The meeting went well. We purchased our horses instead of renting them so we got back faster.”

“Purchased?” Tommy echoed. They didn’t have the money for that. Hunting only paid so well. His parents had always rented horses and returned them to the stable in the village.

“We’ll be making a lot of money soon.” His mother said. She had that same soft pleased look as when Tommy did extra well at one of their quizzes. “So, we figured an advanced purchase would be worth it.”

“Money? Did a charm turn out well?” Tommy asked. The charms they made were the bulk of their income. His stomach lurched as he remembered how those charms were made.

“No.” His father said. His mother ducked past him, inside the house. “The capital city will be taking Wilbur. And paying us handsomely for his capture.”

“But don’t you have to make the deal?” Tommy asked. This was wrong. Wilbur was a person, he couldn’t just be sold like that. He’d been so excited about them finishing the damn deal, getting to go back to his family. “And send him back?”

“Wilbur is a hostage.” His dad said. “As soon as he returns, the Winter Court will renege on the deal. Besides, do you know the advancements we could make by studying a royal Fae?”

“Almost makes me want to keep him!” His mother said sunnily.

His father sighed, obviously seeing the shock still on his face. “I know it’s hard after seeing one. But you have to remember, these things aren’t people.”

Tommy swallowed back bile, hoping his father didn’t notice how ill he still looked. He thought Wilbur would be going home soon, back to his brother and father.

But instead, he’d be sent to the capital and tortured under the guise of research.

“That’s how it always starts.” Wilbur said, smiling faintly. “This isn’t the first ransom I’ve seen. First, it begins by saying they’ll finally hobble a Court and save everyone. Then, they’ll start demanding wealth, wishes, magic. For us to bend the knee.”

Gods, what were his parents doing?

“Are you hungry?” His mother asked, interrupting his thoughts. Tommy shook his head quickly, stepping aside for his dad.

“No, I just ate.” He said. “I’m going to finish working on Henry’s pen. I want to get it done before I go to sleep.”

“Suit yourself.” She said. Both of his parents disappeared into the house. Life moved on. Neither cared about what was going to Wilbur.

Tommy’s grip tightened on the shovel.

But he did care.

Foolishly, he did care for the Fae. No matter what terrible things Wilbur had done, the amount of blood the Fae had spilled, it wasn't fair to treat him like a research subject.

Tommy stayed out working on the pen late into the night. Every once in a while, he'd glance up at the house, waiting for the lights to darken.

When only the study light was on, he picked up his shovel and headed for the house. He made sure to toss the shovel to the side and stomp a bit hard.

Not that that was difficult to accomplish. The leftover rage simmering in him made him want to stomp around and yell a lot. It felt wrong not to show it.

"I'm off to bed!" What was once routine now felt hollow. There was no answer from a closed door. No offer of a lullaby or someone rambling on until he drifted off.

Tommy slowly closed his door, throwing himself into his bed. Even surrounded by blankets, he still felt cold.

Was this the right decision to make? Tommy rolled over in his blankets. He hated how indecisive he was feeling. On one hand, Wilbur wasn't going to suddenly become a good person. But on the other, he didn't deserve what was going to happen to him.

Tommy closed his eyes. No more thinking about it. If his parents weren't big enough to do the right thing, then he was going to do it. Nobody deserved to be used for research.

It felt like eternity before the faint light ticked off and he heard footsteps walking across the floor. Tommy closed his eyes, trying his best to even out his breathing.

His door creaked open. Tommy tried to stay still. He itched to fidget, to flop over, but that would give him away. Tubbo told him he was a surprisingly heavy sleeper.

The door closed. He heard footsteps go down the hallway and the door to his parent's bedroom shut. Tommy slowly sat up.

Just a bit longer. He fidgeted with his blanket, watching as the moonlight went across the floor. Eventually, it hit the point where he was almost certain they were asleep. That, and he didn't feel like he could wait any longer without exploding from all the energy locked up in him.

He slipped out of bed, tiptoeing to the window and easing it open. It was a bit of a tricky climb, but the door was creaky. His parents would wake up right away if he used it.

Tommy slithered down the side of the house, circling around to the front. He reached under the porch, feeling around until his fingers hit metal.

He grinned, pulling them out. The only secret he'd ever managed to keep. He had practiced for hours trying to work out how to use lock picks after seeing it in a book. It was just so damn cool that he couldn't resist.

But now, he'd actually get to use it. Tommy circled around the side of the house, crouching in front of the cellar. The lock was solid iron so his parents hadn't bothered to send up an alarm sigil.

It felt like it took hours to pick the lock but the amount of relief he felt when the lock clicked was indescribable. He was ready for everything to go back to normal.

Tommy crept down the stairs, shivering a bit. It was really dark. It wasn't a problem for him but other people might find the dark a bit creepy.

"Wilbur?" He said softly. Across the room, a shadowy figure stirred.

"Toms?" There was a flash of teeth as Wilbur yawned, sitting up. "Isn't it past your bedtime?"

"First of all, fuck you." Tommy snapped. He winced, hoping his parents didn't hear that. "I'm here to break you out."

"Won't you get in trouble?" Wilbur whispered. "I'm valuable to them. If they find out you're a traitor, they'll kill you."

"They'll do worse to you." Tommy whispered fiercely. "They're sending you to the capital to be a research subject. They got money and everything for it. It's pure torture, big man."

Wilbur sighed. "I told you so." He said. "Humans can be terrible."

"I'm human." Tommy said. He stepped past the first line of runes. "So, fuck off with that."

"You're different."

Tommy rolled his eyes. Ugh, fucking Wilbur with always starting a debate that didn't make any sense. "I'm not here to fucking debate or whatever. I'm gonna break you out."

"Aw. I knew you liked me." Tommy glared at him and knew Wilbur had noticed because he chuckled. "What's the plan?"

"Not much." Tommy admitted. "I've got lock picks and I know a route that they can't see from their window."

He pulled out his lock picks. "Figured we could mess up the cell a bit, yeah?" So you can get out and it looks like someone broke in."

"That I can do." Wilbur said. He grinned as the door swung open. Tommy shivered as the temperature dropped a few degrees.

"Figured, big man." He paused as the cell door swung open. For some reason, he almost felt guilty for what he was about to say next. He wasn't quite sure why because a big man like him never felt guilty. "You're not going to kill me if I release you, right?"

“No!” Wilbur said, surprising Tommy with his ferocity. “I’ll never hurt you, Tommy. We’re like brothers, aren’t we? I wouldn’t lay a finger on you.”

Tommy nodded, putting a hand out. “Okay, I’ll trust you then.” He said. He crouched down, reaching for the chains.

One last chance. He could walk out of this cell.

Tommy slipped the lock picks into the lock and moved them until he heard the click. There was a soft clatter as the manacles felt the short distance to the floor.

He made a choked sound as Wilbur lunged forward, twisting like an eel to avoid Tommy blindly jabbing at him. But Wilbur just wrapped him up in a freezing cold hug.

“Were you really going to stab me with a lock pick?” Wilbur whispered into his ear. Tommy scowled into his shoulder but lowered the lock pick from where it had been pressed into his chest.

“No one said you could hug me, bitch.” He tried to ignore how terrible it felt when Wilbur pulled away.

“It’s time to do some crime.” Wilbur said, smiling. Tommy smiled back.

Tommy stood up, walking over to the salt and scraping at it with his foot. There was a cracking sound behind him, Wilbur was tracing curlicues of frost around the stone anchor for the manacles. With an easy tug on the stone, he tore them out of the wall.

“Okay, that’s pretty cool.” Tommy said. Wilbur chuckled, carefully placing the stone down. Frost seeped out from where his hands grazed the floor, winding its way up the bars, slow but determined.

“That should be enough.” Wilbur said. Tommy frowned. He hadn’t even gotten started! “They’ll never believe it was me if too much is torn up.”

“I guess you’re right.” Tommy said, kicking at the salt again. He’d cleared a path for Wilbur. Wilbur bumped his shoulder, strangely affectionate. “Let’s get you out of here, big man.”

He winced every time the stairs creaked under his feet. Wilbur put one hand on his shoulder and Tommy shifted a bit, but ultimately didn’t knock it off. If Wilbur wanted comfort, who was he to deny him?

The route he picked took them past the real animal pens. Henry was still fast asleep in his shelter, content and oblivious to the world. “Is that Henry?” Wilbur whispered.

“Yeah. Coolest cow in the world.” Tommy said proudly. He tiptoed around the pen, knowing Henry would moo if he saw them. “I’ve raised him from a calf.”

“He’s certainly cute.” Wilbur said. “Did you know some hunters will give their children pets and then instruct them to kill them? It’s to break them of their attachments.”

Tommy stiffened. “My parents wouldn’t do that to me.” He said but a thread of unease had already slipped in. He had to beg to get his parents to keep Henry after finding him alone and motherless in the forest. They wouldn’t make him kill Henry.

But wouldn’t they, a little voice in his mind whispered. They already sold someone instead of striking an agreement to protect people. What’s a cow to them?

“I didn’t say your parents would do that.” Wilbur said. “I like talking about trivia.”

“Well, I don’t.” Tommy said. Wilbur hummed, but didn’t say anything else as they approached the boundary line.

Tommy was surprised how... disappointed he felt. After Wilbur left, he’d never see him again. And really, that’s very terrible for Wilbur, given how cool Tommy was.

“Alright, this is it.” Tommy said, trying to steady himself. “The alarms haven’t been fixed here yet after an incident where Henry ran around the yard. If you leave now, they won’t even notice.”

“And what are you doing?” Wilbur said. His grip was tight on Tommy’s shoulder.

“I’m going back.” Tommy said. He looked back towards the house. “They’ll think someone else broke you out, I’m gonna pretend I was asleep. Nobody has to know.”

“You’re going back to them?” Tommy nearly flinched back as Wilbur’s eyes went wild, pulling him close. “Tommy, your parents aren’t good people, you’re not safe here!”

“They’re my parents!” Tommy retorted. They had never hurt him! They had tried to protect him! They were definitely wrong about some stuff, but weren’t all adults stupid sometimes?

“Listen.” Wilbur said and Tommy hated when Wilbur used the ‘I’m an adult’ tone of voice. “I just don’t think it’s safe for you to stay with them. You had nightmares about what you saw.”

“Where else am I supposed to go?” Tommy said, bluntly. Tubbo’s family would send him right back even if his friend was fighting for him. No one in the village would hide him. He couldn’t just walk out into the night like Wilbur could.

“You could come stay with me.” Wilbur insisted. His other hand came up to cup Tommy’s cheek. “You’re saving my life, that would definitely earn you safety. And Philza and Techno would love you. We don’t have to fight or be at odds, you could be safe.”

For a moment, Tommy let himself lean into Wilbur’s touch, imagining a world where he could forget the danger and follow Wilbur into the snow.

But just because Wilbur was nicer now, didn’t mean he was actually better. Tommy took a step back, dislodging Wilbur’s hands. “I’ll be fine.” He said. “You should head back home.”

He dodged Wilbur’s outstretched hand, turning and sprinting back to the house. For some reason, he could feel someone watching him every step of the way.

Tommy didn't bother closing the cellar door, simply scaling up the wall again and pulling his window shut. He slid into bed and hoped that morning would soon be here.

Because then at least, he could get the talk over. It wasn't going to end well and he knew it.

It could have been worse, Tommy thought sourly. His cheek stung, still red from the slap. His parents didn't think he did it, but they were mad that he had also slept through it.

He grumbled to himself, picking up the next bucket to fill Henry's trough. Apparently he was just supposed to know that Wilbur was making an escape attempt.

His father had gone out to look for clues in hopes of finding Wilbur before he went too far. Tommy was worried, but pretty certain they wouldn't find him. Between rest and the apples, many of Wilbur's burns had healed at an astonishingly quick rate.

He had tossed the lock picks in the well, knowing his parents could never find them there. It had sucked and he was going to miss them but it was far too risky to keep them.

Maybe he could get a new set eventually. Pass it off as a new skill he wanted to learn. Tommy shivered as a cold breeze hit him, stopping in front of Henry's trough and dumping the next bucket of water in.

It felt strangely normal. He had thought saving someone would feel more... just different. But he still felt like Tommy. He hadn't seen Wilbur since the Fae had disappeared into the trees.

But Tommy felt like the bastard was still around. Sometimes he could feel unseen eyes watching him and it made him feel itchy.

Henry mooded, distracting Tommy and making him laugh. "You have to come over here for the water." He said, already hopping the fence to get back to the well.

Another soft moo. Tommy carefully filled the bucket of water. "I know you want water but you have to drink what's there." He said. "I'm getting more for the trough but I'm not going to carry it to you."

He turned around, pausing in confusion. Henry was standing in front of the trough, his big brown eyes confused. "What's wrong?" Was there another hole in the trough? He could have sworn he'd checked it.

Henry mooded, stamping at the ground. "Yeah, I'm coming." Tommy said, grabbing the bucket. He gently eased himself over the fence, looking down.

He made a sound of surprise. The water was frozen solid. Slowly, he poured the new bucket of water on top of the old one. Henry stuck his nose under the stream, making Tommy tilt his head, but as it hit the block of ice, mist began to curl out.

By the time the water was gone, the trough was frozen again. Tommy stared at it, not quite comprehending it. It wasn't that cold, was it?

Distantly he could hear ringing.

“Tommy!” He heard. Tommy turned, looking at the house. His mother was leaning out the window, her face a mixture of confusion and fear. “The border alarms!”

What about them? Tommy turned, looking at the edges of their clearing. As he watched, the light of the runes flickered.

Flickered again.

Mist began to seep through the trees.

“Get inside the house!” His mom yelled. Tommy startled into action, dropping the bucket to the ground and hopping the fence. He sprinted towards the house, his long legs eating up the ground. Behind him, he could hear Henry’s heavy footsteps heading for his shelter.

Tommy really hoped Henry would be okay.

He stumbled over the porch, nearly falling through the doorway and pulling the door shut behind him.

“What’s going on?” He asked. “What’s with the perimeter runes? They shouldn’t be doing that.”

“Shut up.” His mom hissed, appearing at the top of the stairs. Tommy recoiled a bit, surprised at the coldness of her tone. “The Fey are taking retribution for what we did. As if it wasn’t retribution for what they’ve done.”

“What?” Tommy said, shocked. But Wilbur had promised he wasn’t going to hurt him! Was that just a Fae twisting their words?

There was a popping sound like a large soap bubble bursting and his mother mumbled a string of words that would have earned him a soap bar. “Crouch.” She hissed, flattening herself to the floor. “Now!”

“I’m doing it.” Tommy said, lowering himself down. He inched back, curling up in the corner closest to the door.

He winced, watching as mist began to seep under the door. Were they just going to hide in here like cornered rats? He glanced up at his room, wondering if he should make a run for his supplies.

A thump. Someone had stepped onto their porch. Tommy saw a shadow flicker past the window. Far too large to be human.

“I don’t think anyone is home.” A voice rumbled.

“Don’t be silly.” A cheery voice said. Tommy froze. He recognized that voice. “I doubt those hunters were smart enough to go anywhere.”

Tommy stared at the floor. So, Wilbur had been lying. He buried his face in his knees, trying to pretend the burning in his eyes was from forgetting to dust.

Tapping on the door. "Hello? Anyone home?" Tommy looked up, glaring at the door like he could burn holes through Wilbur.

"Move out of the way." The unknown voice said. Tommy stiffened, turning to look at his mother. She had already pushed herself further back into the hallway.

Tommy hopped to his feet just as the door shattered. Not fell inward, but shattered as if someone had taken a hammer to a sheet of ice.

The person who stepped through was someone Tommy had never met before but knew like the back of his hands. Bloody tusks and crimson red eyes to match.

Technoblade.

Wilbur pushed into the house, smiling cheerily. "Hello!" He said as if he'd been invited for a fucking housewarming party and not a murder.

"Fuck off." Tommy snapped. He skittered away from Wilbur's outstretched arms, putting the dinner table between him and the Fey. "Get the fuck out of my house."

"Language, Tommy." Wilbur said. Tommy hissed at him. "Look at him! Isn't he adorable!"

"Like a raccoon, yeah." Technoblade said. Tommy gaped at him. He wasn't a raccoon! He was fearsome! Awe inspiring! "Are you sure you don't just want a pet?"

"Absolutely not." Wilbur said. Tommy was forced to move as Wilbur followed him around the table. "He's adorable."

Tommy let out a manly yelp as two heavy hands clapped down on his shoulders. Technoblade held him firmly in place, not giving him an inch to run.

"Fuck you!" He snapped, thrashing in Technoblade's grip. He couldn't get a good angle to claw up Technoblade's hands but by gods was he going to try.

"Aw, be nice Tommy." Wilbur said. Tommy flinched back, suddenly noticing how he was practically sandwiched between the two Fae. "You don't want to hurt anyone."

"Uh, yeah, I fucking do." Tommy snarled. "I'm about to hurt you if you don't let go of me right now."

"And why should he do that?" Technoblade said. "You're trapped, kid. I can tell you don't have a single weapon on you and I could carry you off like a bag of flour."

"Try it and I'll fucking kill you-" Tommy's words were cut off by Technoblade's grip changing, easily hefting him off the floor. He shrieked angrily, his feet dangling above the floor.

“It’s okay.” Wilbur shushed. “I know Technoblade can be kind of scary but you’re safe right now.”

“Then put me the fuck down!” Tommy said, trying to claw at Technoblade. “I’ll fucking kill you! I will!”

“Put my son down.”

Tommy didn’t think he’d ever been so glad to see his mother. And terrified. Because Wilbur’s warm eyes instantly froze over, becoming cold and amused.

He looked at the stairway. At the bottom stood his mother, holding a bow and arrow. Wilbur chuckled, looking at it.

“Do you really think that could stop us?” He mocked. “Oh no! I might get shot! I hope it’s not worse than those chains you kept on me for days!”

“I should have killed you.” His mother said. “I don’t know what possessed me to let you live.”

“Greed.” Wilbur said, taking a step forward. He didn’t even flinch as the bow was trained on him but Technoblade’s grip became tighter, making Tommy hiss a bit. “Humans. You always want more than you deserve.”

“Put my son down. He isn’t part of this.” His mother said. Tommy felt like he was frozen, unable to look away.

“Isn’t he though?”

Tommy choked, feeling the words cut off in his mouth. What was Wilbur trying to say?

Wilbur looked at him, his eyes filled with dark delight. “He didn’t tell you? We were such good friends while you two were gone. Such good friends that he decided to release me.”

His mother’s face flooded with anger as she looked at him. Tommy flinched back into Technoblade, ready for the slap. “You stupid boy!” She snapped. “After everything we’ve done for you!”

“I-“ Tommy said. He wasn’t quite sure what to say for once. Curse? Explain himself?

He’d never get a chance to say it.

Wilbur lunged forward, taking advantage of her split attention. Lightning quick, he grabbed her head and there was an awful cracking noise.

A spray of blood. Technoblade’s grip shifted, a hand coming up to cover his eyes. “Wilbur, their property value.” He said like Tommy couldn’t hear his mother screaming.

“Let go of me!” He yelled, thrashing and kicking. He had to help her, had to get the medical kit, fix the mess he had made.

But Wilbur just kept talking in that awful placid voice of his. “I would sing him to sleep, see. He’s so cute when he sleeps, so much calmer. We’re like brothers, you know, and even he knows that.”

“I hate you!” Tommy shrieked, anguished. He wanted Wilbur to shut up, wanted to strangle him so he’d stop telling his mother about the foolish things he’d done. “I fucking hate you!”

Another awful cracking sound. Silence. Footsteps padded across the floor. “You don’t mean that.” Wilbur said. His voice was as cold as ice.

“I do.” Tommy said. He was starting to hyperventilate. Was his mother okay? “I fucking do, I hate you.”

He thought Wilbur was maybe a little nice but he was a monster too. Just like his parents.

Wilbur sighed, resting a cold palm against his cheek. “You don’t mean that.” He said. “You’re scared and I know that makes you lash out. So I’ll forgive you for being cruel.”

“Fuck off with that bullshit.” Tommy said. “I don’t give a fuck if you forgive me or not. I want you to go away and leave us alone.”

“Leave you alone.” Wilbur said, his voice like poisoned honey. Tommy choked on a whine.

No, she couldn’t be dead. She couldn’t die. Not like this. And what about his dad? He had seen him alive just this morning. He couldn’t be dead too.

Wilbur saw his weakness and leapt on it. “Dad got him.” He said cheerily. “That’s why he’s not here for this. He wanted to give him frostbite for every burn I got.”

“No.” Tommy said. He felt like he was choking on his own horror. His father couldn’t be dead.

“It’s true.” Technoblade said, shifting behind him. “I saw it myself. Both of your parents are dead now.”

Tommy swayed. And passed out.

Not for long. He came to just as Technoblade stepped off the porch, arms wrapped around him. Humiliatingly, Technoblade had one arm under his shoulder and the other under his knees, cradling him like he was a baby.

Wilbur was walking next to them, beaming when he saw Tommy’s eyes flicker open. “There you are.” He cooed. “I was worried for a bit there.”

“Wait, where the fuck are we going?” Tommy said, trying to twist in Technoblade’s grip. It felt like it was made of iron, completely unforgiving to him moving. “Put me down!”

“Not far.” Wilbur said. Tommy hissed as a hand patted his hair. “Not by my reckoning. It’s okay, you’re safe now.”

Safe now? What the fuck was that supposed to mean? He was safe before! “I was safer before you fuckers busted into my house!” Tommy said savagely. He tried to bite Technoblade’s arm but the man just shifted his grip like Tommy was just a misbehaving toddler.

“No you weren’t.” Wilbur said. His hand shifted down, cupping Tommy’s cheek. “They hit you.” He said softly.

Tommy flushed red. “So?” He said. “I’m fine. Fuck off.”

Part of him didn’t want to believe it. Wilbur had been so kind. So sweet. The Wilbur who sang him lullabies was nothing like the Wilbur leaning over him with dark eyes.

“You’re not fine.” Wilbur said, condescending. Tommy scowled at him. “I just want to make sure you’re okay.”

“So you murdered my parents?” Tommy said, incredulous. The words tasted like ashes in his mouth.

His parents were dead. There would be no more morning pancakes. No more training. He couldn’t say they were good people but he still didn’t want them dead.

“Wilbur.” The man behind him spoke. “We need to leave soon. All this iron is making me itch.”

“Fuck you, die itchy.” Tommy snarled. The man looked at him and rolled his eyes. “I’m not going anywhere with you!”

“And how do you plan to do that?” Wilbur asked, his grin twisted. “Go ahead. Escape.”

Tommy felt very satisfied kicking him in the stomach. It didn’t do more than make Wilbur’s face twist but it made him feel better. He yelped as he was dragged away from Wilbur roughly.

“Careful!” Wilbur snapped, rushing over to him. There was a bit of tenderness in how he moved but he still rushed to check on Tommy. He hated it. “Don’t hurt him.”

“I’m not going to let him hit you.” Techno said gruffly. “Not that you don’t deserve a kick sometimes.”

“Techno.” Wilbur whined. “But come on, he’s practically a baby. He doesn’t know any better.”

“So?” Techno said, sounding bored. Tommy raised his mouth to argue but it snapped shut as he was shaken again. “Can we go now?”

“Yeah, yeah.” Wilbur said. He beamed at Tommy. But now Tommy could see the darkness in his eyes. “Philza is going to love you.”

Tommy glanced around wildly, trying to find something to save himself. But there was nothing within reach. The Fey walked out of the house and through the yard as if it was

nothing but a casual stroll.

And Wilbur wouldn't stop talking.

"We left Henry alive." Wilbur said, walking next to him. Techno had adjusted his grip so he was holding Tommy under his shoulders and knees again like he was a baby. It made him seethe. "We can come back for him later!"

"I would have killed you if you touched him." Tommy said. But he was relieved to look over and see Henry's pen was untouched. The cow was lapping at the now unfrozen water.

He committed the sight to memory, not believing Wilbur's words. What, would they be coming back to butcher his cow in front of his grave?

Fuck 'em. If he could just escape Technoblade's stupidly strong grip, he'd kill them all.

Tommy flinched at the absent tingling sensation of crossing the border. When he looked at the runes, they were charred and smoking. "How the fuck did you do that?" Tommy said, fury momentarily giving way to curiosity.

Even for Royal Fey, breaking runes were difficult. But this was just utter destruction, destruction unlike their icy magic.

Wilbur sighed, looking annoyed. "I called in a favor." He said. "Your moronic former parents were smart enough to create the runes to oppose our magic."

"We could have broken them ourselves but someone got impatient." Technoblade said. Unnervingly, Tommy couldn't hear his footsteps in the snow. When he twisted his head to look, there were no footprints.

Even if hunters arrived, there was no way they could track them into the woods. If they even wanted to do so, taking on one Royal Fae required weeks of planning and a massive crew. Taking on the entire family was suicide.

Gods, would Tubbo know what happened to him? His friend deserved closure.

There was the soft sound of snow falling from the trees, knocking Tommy from his thoughts. He looked up, flinching back in horror.

The trees were filled with crows of all sizes, their dark feathers standing out in the snow. All of them turned to stare at the newcomers with beady black eyes, filled with far too much intelligence for an animal.

King Philza's birds, Tommy thought, fear leaking into his fury. When the flock came together, someone was going to die.

"You're finally back. I was getting worried."

Tommy glanced at the base of the tree in front of them. For a moment, he thought a human was working with the Fey. And then his eyes landed on the two massive wings behind him.

King Philza. Unlike the picture in the book depicting him in bloodied armor, he wore soft looking robes in green, sandals, and the stupidest hat Tommy had ever seen.

“You better take that fucker off.” Tommy said, staring at the hat like he could set it on fire. His dignity would not allow this.

Philza looked bemused. “Take what off?” He said.

“That hat. It’s the ugliest hat I’ve ever seen. You’re not allowed to kill me while it’s on. It’s an offense against nature.” Tommy said. Who thought bucket hats were a good idea? Why not something pog like a crown?

“I think it looks nice!” Philza said, looking offended. But Wilbur burst into a cackling laugh.

“I told you that hat was hideous!” He said, his shoulders shaking from the force of his laughter. “But no, you just have to get attached to it!”

“It’s nice! Techno understands it!” Philza said, looking past Tommy at the man holding him. “Don’t you, mate?”

There was a moment of silence.

“It’s the ugliest hat I’ve ever seen.”

At that, Wilbur’s laughing fit started all over again. But Philza didn’t get angry at all, just folding his arms and shaking his head. “Well, I like it and that’s all that matters.”

“You better take it off before you kill me. That hat is not going to be the last thing I see.” Tommy said. Wilbur wiped a tear away from his eye, standing up straight again.

“I’m not planning on killing you, mate.” Philza said. Tommy flinched back as he walked closer, expecting a wave of icy magic. Instead, a cool hand settled on his cheek. “Wilbur’s told me a lot about you.”

“He told me about how you like lullabies and gave him apples. Your favorite color. How you love that cow of yours. That you want a sibling. Even how you rescued him.”

Tommy looked at Wilbur, feeling betrayed. He knows it was stupid to expect Wilbur to keep that information secret. But to blab it all to Philza?

Philza chuckled. “I honestly didn’t believe most of it. Humans are like rats, there’s nothing very interesting around them. So we decided to watch you.”

“That was you!” Tommy said. He remembered how he kept feeling watched. “Are you guys creepy stalkers or something?”

“Wilbur is.” There was an angry cry from Wilbur at that. Technoblade, the one who spoke, seemed unconcerned.

“Don’t insult your brother.” Philza said before turning back to look at Tommy. “Imagine my surprise when someone from the most annoying of rat groups turned out to be interesting.”

Tommy didn’t want to be interesting. Because judging by the dark look in Philza’s eyes, he was not going to like what came next.

“Someone so interesting can’t be left as one of the rats.” Philza said. He reached out and set a hand on Tommy’s chest. Tommy started to struggle, to plead, but Philza’s gaze was unflinchingly cold. He smiled. “I think he’ll be a good addition to the family.”

And his world was torn away in a flurry of darkness and bone deep cold.

End Notes

This was an interesting AU! And what happens to Tubbo, you may ask? Maybe I'll touch upon that in a future story.

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!